AMENDED CLAIMS

1-36 (canceled).

37 (currently amended). A device to assist in the training of athletes and the playing of athletic games, the device comprising:

a case;

a first plurality of signaling elements for emitting a first signal, said first plurality of signaling elements being disposed on an outer surface of the case, wherein each element has an on state in which it emits the first signal, and an off state in which it does not emit the first signal;

a second plurality of signaling elements for emitting a second signal, said second signal being distinguishable from the first signal, said second plurality of signaling elements being disposed on an outer surface of the case, wherein each element has an on state in which it emits the second signal, and an off state in which it does not emit the second signal;

a plurality of device states, wherein combinations of the first signal and the second signal define said device states;

a first dial, said first dial setting a mean frequency of transitions between device states;

a second dial, said second dial setting a minimum hold time spent in each device state before a transition to another device state is permitted;

a plurality of switches, said switches setting a time occupancy for each device state, said occupancy values determining the average time spent in each device state;

a controller for driving said signaling elements, wherein said controller is disposed within the case, and wherein said controller drives ~~said signaling elements to produce a sequence of signals that is unpredictable;~~ the first plurality of signaling elements and the second plurality of signaling elements to produce a continuous series of device states which are always unpredictable in sequence and duration, and wherein the actions of said controller are specified by its internal program, the first dial, the second dial, and the switches;

whereby random variation is continuously introduced into the training of athletes and the playing of athletic games.

38 (previously presented). A device according to claim **37**, wherein the case is made of a durable material appropriate for use in an athletic activity.

39 (previously presented). A device according to claim **37**, wherein the case is conical.

40 (previously presented). A device according to claim **37**, wherein the first and second pluralities of signal emitting elements are disposed in rings around the outer surface of the case.

41 (previously presented). A device according to claim **37**, wherein the first signal is a light of a first color, and the second signal is a light of a second color.

42 (previously presented). A device according to claim **37**, wherein the first and second pluralities of signaling elements are LEDs.

43 (previously presented). A device according to claim **37**, wherein power is supplied by a removable battery.

44 (previously presented). A device according to claim **37**, wherein the controller comprises a microprocessor.

45 (canceled).

46 (canceled).

47 (canceled).

48 (currently amended). A device according to claim ~~45~~ 37, wherein a switch sets an order of transitions between device states as sequential or random.

49 (currently amended). A device according to claim ~~45~~ 37, wherein a switch sets a rate of transitions between device states to be either fixed or randomly varying around a mean frequency.

50 (canceled).

51 (currently amended). A device according to claim **45**, wherein the combinations of the first signal and the second signal define four device states, each of said device states representing a different athletic action ~~action to be taken by the athletes~~.

52 (currently amended). A method for the training of athletes and the playing of athletic games comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a controlling means, wherein said controlling means exists at any given time is in one of a plurality of device states, wherein over time said controlling means transitions between said device states;

(b) providing a setting means, wherein said setting means comprises a plurality of dials and a plurality of switches, wherein said controlling means periodically reads from said setting means those parameters which determine the order and timing of transitions of said controlling means between said device states, wherein said parameters result in said controlling means making a sequence of transitions between said device states which is ~~at least partly~~ always random in order ~~or~~ and timing;

(c) providing a signaling means, wherein said signaling means is driven by said controlling means, wherein said signaling means may produce a plurality of distinguishable signals corresponding one to one to said plurality of device states, wherein said signaling means produces at each moment in time a signal from said plurality of distinguishable signals which corresponds to that device state in which said controlling means currently exists, wherein said signal is unpredictable by an observer;

whereby allowing athletes to associate said plurality of distinguishable signals one to one with an equal numbered plurality of actions appropriate within the context of athletic training or the playing of athletic games, thus continuously introducing unpredictable variation into athletic training or the playing of athletic games.

53 (currently amended). A method according to claim **52**, wherein the controlling means comprises a microprocessor, wherein the setting means ~~comprises dials and switches,~~ comprises:

(a) a first dial, said first dial setting a mean frequency of transitions between device states;

(b) a second dial, said second dial setting a minimum hold time spend in each device state;

(c) a plurality of switches, said switches setting a time occupancy for each device state,

wherein the signaling means comprises a set of red LEDs and a set of blue LEDs, wherein said signaling means is capable of producing four distinct signals corresponding to all four combinations of said red LEDs and said blue LEDs when on or off. ~~off, wherein said controlling means exists in one of four device states corresponding one-to-one with said four distinct signals, wherein said controlling means transitions between said four device states, wherein the parameters affecting the order and timing of said transitions are determined by said dials and switches of said setting means, wherein said parameters direct that the order and timing of said transitions between said four device states is at least partially random, wherein a resulting sequence of device states in which said controlling means exists is unpredictable, wherein a corresponding sequence of signals produced by said signaling means is correspondingly unpredictable, whereby athletes may be directed to perform an unpredictable sequence of four distinct actions by a corresponding unpredictable sequence of four distinct signals.~~